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SUBJECT: Georgia seeks Latin American allies on territorial integrity

¶1. (SBU) As part of its campaign to prevent additional Latin American countries from recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a delegation from Georgia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited Costa Rica November 16-18. MFA Head of the Americas Department Otar Berdzenishvili told us that Georgia was reaching out to Latin American countries, because Russia had been working hard to persuade them to recognize the break-away regions. He said his delegation had made its case to representatives from the UN missions of 14 Latin American countries in New York the week of November 8. They were now visiting Costa Rica, Argentina, and Cuba, and they hoped to visit other Latin American countries in the coming months. As part of its efforts to engage with Latin America, Berdzenishvili reported that Georgia planned to open an embassy in Brazil and establish some sort of diplomatic representation elsewhere in Latin America.

¶2. (SBU) Berdzenishvili said Georgia was confident of Costa Rica's support for its territorial integrity, commenting that the Costa Rican ambassador to the UN had spoken passionately on Georgia's behalf two years ago. They were visiting Costa Rica at this time simply for scheduling reasons; the GOCR was available to receive them, while other Latin American governments had their calendars full. That said, since Georgia does not have a presence here, he requested that the U.S. embassy help keep Georgia on the mind of the GOCR after the visit.

¶3. (U) During the visit, Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Nalbandov and Costa Rican Deputy Foreign Minister Edgar Ugalde signed a memorandum of understanding that provides a legal basis for political consultations in bilateral and multilateral fora. According to Costa Rican MFA Political Director Alejandro Solano, Costa Rica has MOUs of this nature with 70 countries. The Georgian delegation also met with Costa Rica's trade promotion and tourism ministries in hopes of expanding contact in both areas.
BRENNAN